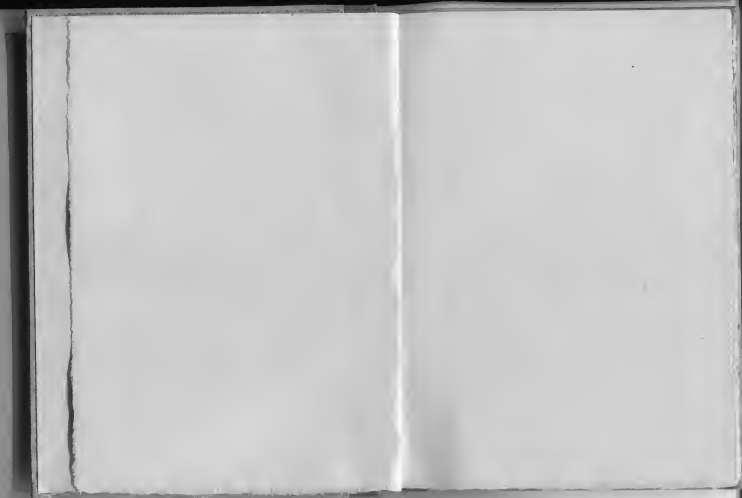




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PONT



TO THE MEMBERS OF THE

S.T.A

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good" is an old proverb from the land of my boyhood and the Scottish way of making a positive statement. Anyhow, it was in the inspiration of the Society of Typographic Arts' recent meeting, held for the primary purpose of presenting the Society's first Membership Certificate and honoring the designer, Mr. Raymond F. DaBoll, that the idea of this keepsake book was proposed to me by Mr. Norman W. Forgue, director of the distinguished Black Cat Press. It was easy for me to accept Mr. Forgue's challenge to become an author, but it has not been so easy for the challenger to extract the finished manuscript. And so it is only fair to acknowledge the fact that this book is now ready for presentation to members of the S.T.A. because of Norman W. Forgue's devotion to the idea and to the numerous details of its manufacturing, and because of his earnestness in making me perform.

R. HUNTER MIDDLETON

*March 23, 1937*

*Chicago Letter Founding*

# *Chicago* *Letter Founding*

by

R. HUNTER MIDDLETON

*Director, Department of Typeface  
Design of the Ludlow Typograph Company  
and the Designer of Forty-one Typefaces.*



*The BLACK CAT PRESS, Chicago, 1937*

# *Chicago* *Letter Founding*



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THE ART OF LETTER FOUNDING has never excited the interest of Chicago's historians, but enthusiasts of the Typographic Arts who delight in the boast that Chicago is the printing center of the nation might be willing to consider the manufacturing of typefaces as a worthy contribution to the city's reputation. These notes, therefore, which concern chiefly the work of a Chicago punch and matrix cutter and his clients, are addressed to the few individuals who can qualify as enthusiasts in such matters.

The centennial of Chicago's first printed item was celebrated along with the Century of Progress exposition in 1933. One hundred years previously, John Calhoun started setting type for Chicago's first newspaper and on November 26, 1833, published the first issue of the *Chicago Democrat*. This title mirrored Calhoun's political status as a Jacksonian Democrat. The paper's motto, attributed to Benjamin Franklin, read "Where liberty dwells, there is my Country." Note also that Chicago's first newspaper antedated the incorporation of the settlement as a city. The latter event was recorded in a printed item, an *Act to Incorporate the City of Chicago* as having taken place on March 4, 1837.

The first Chicago typesetting event of general interest occurred after the smoke of the great fire had cleared away. The typefoundry firm of Messrs. Marder, Luse and Company saved only their punches from the

conflagration. Because of the necessity of starting anew, the firm decided to establish a revised system of type bodies. The twelve point pica of the MacKellar, Smith and Jordan Company, Philadelphia, was adopted as their standard pica, and after a few years the re-equipped Chicago firm offered for sale types that were based upon their new system called "the American system of interchangeable type bodies." This initial activity of Messrs. Marder, Luse and Company later influenced the American Type Founders' Association to name a committee to consider a standard point system for the United States. The American point system resulted, giving the pica (12 points) the numerical value of .166 inches.

If we consider Chicago's rapid strides in industrial development during the last twenty-five years, it is not surprising to find men of a present generation credited with the most significant contributions to the city's progress



in typefounding. To the late Robert Wiebking goes the distinction of being the first person in Chicago to provide that reliable typefounding craftsmanship through which men of greater creative power were able to give their designs the physical form of printing types. What Edward P. Prince contributed to English private press printing when he engraved the punches for the Kelmscott Press fonts, the Doves Press fonts, and others, Robert Wiebking of Chicago contributed to fine printing in America.

Robert Wiebking came to the United States in 1881 with his father, Herman Wiebking, and family. He was born eleven years earlier in Schwelem, Germany, where his father had practiced engraving. Whether by inclination or persuasion, Robert was apprenticed to a Chicago engraver in 1884. He spent eight years at the bench of his employer, C. H. Hanson, before judging himself qualified to

start his own business. Robert Wiebking then selected for his life's work the heritage of his father — cutting punches and matrices for the production of printing types.

The elder Wiebking brought his matrix engraving machine with him from Germany, but the late eighties saw his passing, so it remained for his eldest son, Robert, to develop the invention. After the day's work at the bench, young Robert must have experienced many thrills and discouragements while experimenting with his father's engraving machine. At any rate, two years after leaving the engraving firm of C. H. Hanson, he was ready to accept commissions for engraving punches or matrices.

One can hardly believe, however, that Robert Wiebking's commercial engraving experience endowed him with his appreciation for letter forms or his remarkable type-sense. Perhaps these qualities were in his

blood. His work unquestionably demonstrated a rare faculty of interpreting faithfully the creations of his clients and contributing materially to the ultimate success of these creations.

Although, in the writer's opinion, Robert Wiebking's noblest contribution to letter founding was his skill at working in cooperation with other designers, yet in justice to the craftsman, his own accomplishments in designing should also be mentioned. Among the typefaces designed by Wiebking, all of which have appeared in typefounders' catalogs are: Caslon Clearface, Caslon Clearface Italic, Engravers' Litho Bold, Engravers' Litho Bold Condensed, Invitation Text, Advertisers' Gothic family, Artcraft, Artcraft Italic, Artcraft Bold, Munder Venezian family, Caslon Catalog, Engravers' Roman, Engravers' Bold, Century Roman, Century Italic, Scotch Roman, and a family of Steel-Plate Gothics.

Biographical material about Frederic W. Goudy, the father of American typeface design, is voluminous, but a review of his early activities in Chicago is all that is pertinent to our story. It was in Chicago that Mr. Goudy's early efforts in hand lettering and typeface design first received that necessary and very practical encouragement — remuneration. His clients were such merchant firms as Marshall Field & Company, Hart, Schaffner & Marx, A. C. McClurg & Company, Lyon & Healy, Kuppenheimer & Company, and others. The typefounder firms of Marder, Luse and Company, Central Type Foundry, and the Keystone Type Foundry of Philadelphia nibbled at Mr. Goudy's talents very lightly, because, it must be remembered, this period of American typefounding was an engineering one. The artist had to wait until a later day. To a man concerned with the occupation of making a livelihood as well as

with the art of lettering, pecuniary encouragement was golden.

Mr. Goudy relates that the advertising department of Kuppenheimer & Company even went so far as to commission him to design a new type for their exclusive use. This was unprecedented in those days, but the type reached the drawing stage only. For Kuppenheimer's advertising manager, courageous up to the point of final approval of the drawings, gave up when faced with the expense of matrix cutting. The adventure ended with Mr. Goudy receiving back his drawings with a nominal sum for his labor.

Thus ended the first phase in Mr. Goudy's typeface designing career. A sequence of events followed. These included an association with an enthusiastic youngster, Will Ransom (himself destined to a career of consistent devotion to printing design), the birth and christening of the Village Press,

and the decision to make the Kuppenheimer typeface design the exclusive type of the new private press. Thus the design which had been intended for commercial use became, with a few revisions dictated by its new purpose, the famous Village type. Matrix cutting in 16-point size was entrusted to Robert Wiebking, and at the elbow of this craftsman Mr. Goudy witnessed the making of patterns which were to be used for engraving the matrices of his first important typeface. Later, in the barn of his Park Ridge suburban home, under the sympathetic watchfulness of Mrs. Goudy and assisted by the eager hands of Will Ransom, the first proofs of the Village type were pulled. This dramatic event, and each recurring thrill that accompanied the printing of a new Village Press title, furnished the glow for Mr. Goudy's advance. This advance has taken Mr. Goudy and the late Bertha Goudy, the master compositor of Goudy types,

over many and varied courses, until now, at a mellow age, Frederic W. Goudy has completed his one hundredth typeface design. In addition to drawing, he also performs personally all the technical steps in typefounding at his Village Foundry and home, Deepdene, near Marlborough-on-Hudson, New York.

The casual records kept by Robert Wiebking disclose no reliable dates. He did, however, record the sequence of matrices engraved for Goudy, the first of which must have been done about thirty-five years ago. The list follows: Pabst, Pabst Italic, Powell, Village, Barron (or Boston News Letter), Forum Title, Kennerley, Kennerley Italic, Collier, Goudy Modern, Goudy Open, Goudy Solid, Forum Bold. In the *Story of The Village Type* printed at the press of the Woolly Whale, Mr. Goudy's own chronological list of typefaces and the engraver of each is recorded. Here we find that other Goudy type-

faces had their beginning in Robert Wiebking's shop. This list includes the following additional faces: Norman Capitals, Sherman, Goudy Lanston, Goudy Roman, Klaxon, Hadriano, Goudy Modern Italic, Nabisco, Goudy New Style, and Marlboro.

Of paramount importance to Chicago letter founding was the production of the Centaur type, which brings Bruce Rogers into our story. Mr. Rogers' place in American book design parallels Mr. Goudy's eminence as a typeface designer. It so happened that Bruce Rogers felt the urge to design a distinctive typeface for printing *The Centaur*, by Maurice de Guérin, translated by George B. Ives. This thin quarto was issued from the Montague Press in 1915, in an edition of one hundred and thirty-five copies, for private distribution. The type was called Centaur, and Robert Wiebking became the interpreter of Mr. Roger's drawings for matrix engraving.

"No client was more exacting in his stipulations for perfection than Bruce Rogers," Mr. Wiebking once stated in conversation with the writer. One of the writer's most prized possessions is a set of proofs from the patterns engraved on zinc plates by the hand of Robert Wiebking. These proofs show a sympathetic feeling for the quality of line which only the designer himself could rival. The graciousness with which Mr. Rogers has often referred to Robert Wiebking's work, in connection with the Centaur type, reflects his own generosity and his high regard for Mr. Wiebking's skill.

The Centaur type was designed after the Nicolas Jensen model. It is said by Frederic Warde, in his account of Bruce Rogers's work, published under the title *Bruce Rogers, Designer of Books*, that the first approach to the design was made by tracing over enlarged photographs of Jenson's type. But he inti-

mates further that to give the impression that these tracings constituted the sole designing effort would be entirely misleading. An observation of the pattern characters reveals that the Centaur letters are marked in their differences from the Jenson forms. The Centaur letters are trimmer; there is more contrast between the thick and thin strokes; the letters are drawn with more daring; and in composition the effect is lighter and gayer than the monumental effect of a Jenson page.

After the premier cutting of the 14-point Centaur, rights to use several larger sizes of capitals were granted to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Museum uses these types today for exhibit labels and for an occasional production of the Museum Press.

Still another Centaur chapter was written a few years ago, when Bruce Rogers was commissioned by the Oxford University Press to design a lectern Bible. Mr. Rogers elected

to use the Centaur type for this work. In order to have the necessary sizes available and the composition done in a modern method, it was necessary to take up the task of guiding the design through the various typefounding stages once again. This time the English Monotype Corporation produced the matrices in a complete series of sizes. Thus a typeface born in the modest workshop of a Chicago matrix engraver has become the vehicle of Holy Writ and graces the lecterns of English cathedrals.

Another designer whom it is a privilege to honor is Oswald Cooper, still an active member of the firm of Bertsch and Cooper, advertising typographers. This designer's fine taste and brilliant execution of lettering for advertising has been one of the craft's enrichments for over a quarter of a century. A person of taste who ever hung one of Oswald Cooper's calendars on his office wall will have no other

in succeeding years. These calendars have been a Bertsch and Cooper tradition for years and are usually entirely hand-lettered.

Perhaps no advertising type swept the country so completely as did Cooper Black. This smashing typeface was produced by the former Chicago typefoundry of Barnhart Brothers & Spindler from Mr. Cooper's drawings. The Cooper Oldstyle and Cooper Italic are book typefaces well known to printers.

It is regrettable that Mr. Cooper's activities in typeface design ended with the passing of Barnhart Brothers & Spindler some eight years ago. His interest is still alive, his ideas fresh and easy to accept. It is the hope of his friends and admirers that some typefoundry or typesetting machine company will lay claim to the unique ability of Oswald Cooper. In that event the jewellery of Chicago's letter founding crown will have the attention of a master.

No typefoundry as such exists in Chicago at the present time. However, activity in typeface design is not lagging. We find the Ludlow Typograph Company leading in the production of typefaces suited to contemporary needs. This firm's beginning had to do with the perfecting of a typesetting method. With the mastery of these problems, its leaders soon discovered that they were virtually typefounders of a new order and that typefaces were the life-blood which gave their composing machine meaning and utility value.

The Ludlow Company has managed its punch engraving problems independently for about twenty years. During the earlier days of the company's activity, the engraving work followed the pattern which has prevailed throughout this story. The Ludlow company also availed itself of the experience and skill of Robert Wiebking. Although Mr. Wiebking had very little faith in the Ludlow

method of composition, his attention to the company's early and later engraving problems was never lacking in sincere craftsmanship.

The relationship between the Ludlow Company and Robert Wiebking grew to be friendly and profitable to both parties. As a result of this association, Robert Wiebking and William A. Reade, the founder and president of the Ludlow Company, until his death in 1929, made an arrangement whereby the Ludlow Company purchased one of Wiebking's engraving machines. This arrangement, together with a brief period of tutelage in engraving methods by Wiebking, launched the Ludlow Company on an independent engraving program. Mr. Wiebking lived to see the Ludlow Company succeed and to find in the "upstart" a constant and reliable client. It is also gratifying to record that Wiebking continued to do Ludlow engraving work until his death on June 25, 1927.

The Ludlow Typograph Company's position in the field of typeface design has always been conscientiously related to its machine's true purpose as a composition tool. Because of this relationship between the typefaces and the machine's objective, the company has developed a greater number of display or advertising typefaces than of traditional or book faces. Among the well known Ludlow advertising faces are such families and individual series of distinctive design as Tempo, Karnak, Eden, Stellar, Ultra Modern, Umbra, Mandate, Delphian, Mayfair, Hauser Script. Of the book faces, Caslon True-cut is an authentic cutting of William Caslon's types in roman and italic. Bodoni Modern and its Italic are based upon an original Bodoni source. Ludlow Garamond was the first contemporary version of Garamond's types to be based upon the authentic types of this master. Since Garamond cut no italics to speak of, the Ludlow Gara-

mond Italic is based upon the italics of Robert Granjon, whose italic types were contemporary with Garamond's roman, also harmonious in effect. The Nicolas Jenson roman is a faithful reproduction of Jenson's types, drawn by Ernst F. Detterer, formerly head of the Department of Printing Arts of the Art Institute of Chicago and now Curator of Fine Books at the Newberry Library, Chicago. The Nicolas Jenson Italic was drawn without a model in the company's design department, as were all other series in the Nicolas Jenson family. Of the advertising faces the Ultra Modern is credited to Douglas C. McMurtrie and the Hauser Script to George Hauser, designer, of New York City. The remaining faces in the advertising group, and all the book faces mentioned, excepting the Nicolas Jenson roman, were drawn by the present director of the Ludlow company's department of typeface design.



Apologies for omissions may be due the craftsmen identified with Chicago's "legitimate" letter founding during the period covered by our narrative. If such be the case, the omissions were not intentional, but because the writer has no knowledge of any noteworthy typeface survivals of these foundries.

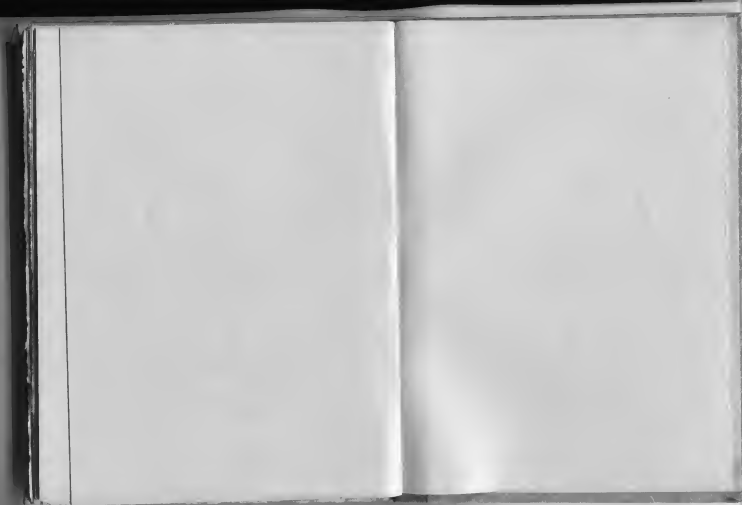


## *Colophon*

Of this volume there have been 750 copies printed from Linotype Granjon and Ludlow Garamond on Rives hand-made paper, for private distribution to the members of The Society of Typographic Arts and friends of the individuals and organizations listed below, whose whole-hearted co-operation has made possible the production of this book. N. W. F.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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